

Our Own Worst Enemy

Sailors hurt themselves every holiday season while stringing and taking down lights like this.



The former Commander, Naval Safety Center, RADM George Mayer, once said, “The vast majority of mishaps are the result of our own doing—our errors and poor decisions.” If you had any doubts, just take a peek at these incidents:

- It doesn’t pay to get in a hurry, especially when you’re working 20 feet off the ground. That’s the lesson an E-6 learned the hard way. While backing up, moving a tarp over an unshingled section of a new roof, he accidentally stepped off the edge. The E-6 broke his left fibula and severely bruised the sole of his right foot.

- An E-4 had consumed a large amount of alcohol and was making his way back to the ship with a liberty buddy when, for unknown reasons, he decided to jump from the main pier to a barge 8 feet below. Both of his ankles buckled when he landed on the barge. While the liberty buddy ran to the ship’s quarterdeck to get help, the E-4 climbed a ladder from the barge to the pier, where ship’s medical personnel helped him to the ship. They then took him to a hospital, where X-rays revealed two broken ankles. Surgery followed, and the victim spent two months in ankle casts.

- If you think water fights are just for kids, tell that to an E-4 who went running down some stairs during such a fight. He slipped and fell, landing on his

back. He felt immediate pain but waited a week to see a doctor, who diagnosed muscle strain and ordered a week’s light duty.

- If you’re going to walk and eat ice cream at the same time, you’d better pay attention to your surroundings. An E-6 didn’t, and he ended up in a hospital with a broken right foot. He landed wrong after stepping off a four-inch curb at a beachfront.

- Springtime tasks around the house can be a pain in more ways than one. An E-5 had finished cleaning out the gutters on his house and was climbing down a ladder when he missed a step and fell about 10 feet. He landed on his left shoulder and broke his clavicle.

- An E-4 had been out partying with some shipmates after returning from an at-sea period. The group was returning to their motel at 0215, when they saw some more shipmates in the motel’s swimming pool. They hurried upstairs to change clothes, so they could join their friends. As the E-4 was coming back down the stairs to the pool area, he missed a step and landed wrong on his heel. He dismissed the initial pain as nothing more than a slight sprain but found out a few days later, when he went to medical for X-rays, that he had a broken heel bone. ➡